

The Department should examine the possibility of placing political officers in both Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Although small countries in terms of population, they both are important regional political centres. The countries are also increasingly important contact points for political figures from other Middle Eastern, Central and South Asian countries.

The Department should explore possibilities of exchange programs with junior diplomats of the region's Foreign Ministries. Although Saudi Arabia is unlikely to show interest in such exchanges, other Governments in the Gulf would. Given personnel constraints within the Department, such exchanges would be of a much shorter nature than those we presently support. None the less, even short exchanges of four to eight weeks would be valuable institutional bridge-builders, and could be integrated into the Arabic language training programs of junior officers.

Communications:

The Department, in liaison with other relevant departments and agencies such as the CBC, Radio Canada, and private broadcasters, should push the concept of an international television presence for Canada. This is especially important in the Gulf and the Arab-speaking world in general, where satellite television news is increasingly influential in shaping public opinion. Currently, Canada is at a distinct disadvantage compared to its G-8 counterparts - the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy and Japan all have their television news available on satellite services in the region.

The Department, in conjunction with Heritage Canada and Arab-Canadian organizations, should support the production and distribution of a video highlighting the achievements of Arab-Canadians. Distribution of this upbeat and positive video could also be popular among Arab-language broadcasters in the region.

As part of its media visits program, the Department should invite prominent journalists from the Gulf to visit Canada. Visit themes could include the Muslim Canadian community, multiculturalism, Canadian high-tech capabilities, as well as education in Canada.

In conjunction with Heritage Canada, Canadian public and private-sector broadcasters, DFAIT could sponsor an international conference on new trends in broadcasting in the region. The heads of major regional broadcasters could be invited to Canada to attend, as would those personalities and firms who are active in satellite broadcasting. Sponsorship of such a conference would help "put Canada on the map" as an international broadcaster and would give Canada media profile in the region. It would also be an excellent opportunity to market Canadian television products and establish personal linkages with the national broadcasting authorities, who presently import most of their English-language programming from the United States and Britain.